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ABSTRACT

A study compared the influence of two forms of discourse completion test (DCT) on the elicitation of rejection of advice. An open questionnaire providing scenarios alone was compared with a classic dialogue completion task in which a conversational turn is provided. The tasks were given to 32 graduate students, 19 native and 13 non-native speakers. Approximately half were administered the questionnaire first and half the dialogue task first, followed by the remaining task. Responses were coded for types of semantic formulas used. Results are presented first for comparison of the two task types for all respondents, then results for native speakers and non-native speakers are compared across tasks. Both speaker groups showed task influence, although the influence was greater for non-native speakers. In many cases, non-native speaker responses were more similar to those of native speakers on the dialogue completion task. It is concluded that for the elicitation of reactive speech acts such as rejections, inclusion of conversational turns is the preferred item format. Contains 11 references. (MSE)

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Refining The DCT: Comparing Open Questionnaires and Dialogue Completion Tasks

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Refining The DCT: Comparing Open Questionnaires and Dialogue Completion Tasks

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This study compares the influence of two forms of discourse completion tasks on the elicitation of rejections of advice. An open questionnaire which provides scenarios alone is compared with a classic dialogue completion task in which a conversational turn is provided. Both native and nonnative speakers show task influence, although for nonnative speakers the influence is greater. In many cases nonnative speaker responses are more similar to those of native speakers on the dialogue completion task. We conclude that, for the elicitation of reactive speech acts such as rejections, the inclusion of conversational turns is the preferred format.

With the widespread use of questionnaires to elicit data in interlanguage pragmatics research, it is important to know how specific types of questionnaires affect participant responses. Because of the nature of this research, it is also important to know whether native and nonnative speakers are influenced differentially by the type of questionnaire. The use of questionnaire data is so common that out of the 35 studies of speech act production reviewed by Kasper and Dahl (1991), 11 studies, or 31%, used Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) as the sole source of data and an additional 8 studies used them as one means of collecting data. Thus, DCTs were used in 54% (19 out of 35) of the studies. In contrast, only 2 of the 35 studies, or just under 6%, used observation of natural language exclusively.

In the present study, we compare two types of DCTs: an open questionnaire and a classic dialogue completion task. While both types are considered to be DCTs, an open questionnaire asks participants to respond to a scenario, and a dialogue

completion task gives at least one conversational turn and may also give a scenario (Kasper, 1991). Examples are given in (1) and (2), respectively.

(1) *Open Questionnaire* Your advisor suggests that you take a course during the summer. You prefer not to take classes during the summer.

You say: _____

(2) *Dialogue Completion Task* Your advisor suggests that you take a course during the summer. You prefer not to take classes during the summer. Advisor: What about taking Testing in the summer?

You say: _____

Other studies have compared the responses to DCTs and natural data (e.g., Beebe & Cummings, 1985; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992), oral role play data to DCT data (e.g., Rintell & Mitchell, 1989), and different types of DCTs (Rose, 1992). Rose tested the effect of providing a hearer response for initiated requests (that is, a response to the turn provided by the participants). In this study we examine the effect of providing a turn to which the participants respond.

Our earliest work on rejections was based entirely on natural conversational data drawn from academic advising sessions between faculty advisors and native and nonnative English speaking graduate students (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991). We employed questionnaires as a supplement to conversational data because there were not enough native speaker rejections in the natural corpus to establish a native speaker norm with certainty (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). The questionnaires proved quite useful for that purpose and permitted the testing of additional hypotheses as well.

When we analyzed the questionnaire data for both the native (NS) and nonnative speakers (NNS) we found that certain scenarios elicited rejections which were very different from those which occurred in the natural data. Since the open questionnaire did not provide advisor turns (see Example 1), we hypothesized that NS and NNS respondents might have been responding to an imaginary advisor whose suggestions were different from those which advisors have been observed to use. This led us to the present inquiry in which we compare the use of open

questionnaire (scenarios alone) to dialogue completion tasks (scenarios with authentic advisor suggestions).

We hypothesized that explicitly providing the advisors' suggestions could influence the responses which participants provided. We further hypothesized that NS and NNS may respond differently to the two types of questionnaires. If this were true, there would be two possible outcomes: 1) that changes in the questionnaire format affect NS more than NNS or 2) that changes in the questionnaire format affect NNS more than NS. If NS show more task influence than NNS, it may be interpreted as showing that NS are more sensitive to details and that NNS respond more to the global situation specified by the prompt. If, on the other hand, NNS show greater task influence than NS, this may be interpreted as indicating that NS are more familiar with the situations provided and that they do not need the same degree of specificity in the prompt. If NNS are affected more by the additional details in the prompt, it may be because the scenarios which the NNS construct for themselves, given a less specific prompt, are different from those constructed by the NS on the basis of the same prompt.

Method

Materials

We used an open questionnaire based on our previous work (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992) and constructed a dialogue completion task with comparable items. Each instrument provided scenarios which were modeled after the advising sessions in the natural corpus. Reasons for rejecting courses were also taken from the conversational data. The dialogue completion task also included advisor suggestions based on those which occurred in the advising sessions.

Items on the questionnaires differed along three features: the status of the course in the program (required or elective), the reason for rejecting the course, and for the dialogue completion task, the type of suggestion given by the advisor as well (directive or non-directive). The questionnaires are given in Appendix A and an overview of their content in Appendix B.

The reasons for rejecting a course varied along a continuum from reasons which are accepted readily by advisors and can be stated explicitly by the student, to reasons which the NS tend not to give in the advising sessions in the natural corpus. Three readily acceptable reasons were included in the task: the course conflicts with another course, the course has already been taken, and the course is a summer course. Three difficult situations presented reasons which NS tend not to express directly: that they are not interested in the advisor's own course, that they do not want to take a course from a particular professor, and that they

do not want to take a course as a result of having previously dropped that course without permission. The other items on the questionnaires fell in between, with reasons including the difficulty of the course (too difficult or too easy), lack of relevance, overlap with a similar course, and unwillingness to commit to an elective.

The open questionnaire. The open questionnaire consisted of 11 items. For each scenario the status of the course and a reason for rejecting the course where given.

The dialogue completion task. The dialogue completion task presented the same course descriptions and reasons for rejections as the open questionnaire, and an advisor recommendation as well. The advisor suggestions were of two types: directives and nondirectives. Advisor directives include suggestions such as *In order to graduate you need to take Traditional Grammar semester after next* and *If you're interested in Phonology, I strongly suggest that you take Professor Smith's L410.* Nondirectives include suggestions such as *Well, there's Syntax and What about taking Testing in the summer?* Because of the balance between directive and non-directive suggestions, the relevant portion of the dialogue completion task consisted of 18 items.[1] Two of the scenarios involving the advisor's own courses included only nondirective suggestions because in the actual advising sessions we observed that advisors did not address directives to the students where their own courses were concerned. In fact, advisors generally seemed reluctant to recommend their own classes strongly. Likewise, nondirective suggestions appear in all cases concerning electives (which includes summer school courses). In the scenario in which the advisor tells the student that a required course that he dropped will not be available until the semester after he had planned to graduate, only the directive form is used.

Procedure

The tasks were administered to 32 graduate students (19 NS and 13 NNS) who had completed at least one academic advising session. Seventeen students responded first to the open questionnaire and completed the discourse completion task the following week. The remaining 15 students completed the discourse completion task first and a week later they responded to the open questionnaire.

ANALYSIS

All responses were coded for types of semantic formulas. Semantic formulas represent the means by which a particular speech act is accomplished in terms of the primary content of an utterance, such as an explanation, or an alternative, or

an apology (Fraser, 1981; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990). Our analysis is based on the semantic formulas proposed for rejections by Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz (1990) and modified by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1991). The five most frequent semantic formulas were Explanations *(I have another class at the same time)*, Alternative Declaratives *(I was thinking about taking Testing instead)*, Alternative Questions *(Could I take Methods?)*, Direct Rejections *(No, I can't,* or *I don't want to take Syntax this semester)* and Agree But (agreement followed by rejection as in *Yeah, but...)*. (Henceforth semantic formulas are indicated by capital letters.)

The mean number of semantic formulas was used to determine the length of the responses. The mean number of semantic formulas used in response to any single item was calculated by dividing the number of semantic formulas produced by the number of responses (total # semantic formulas / N).

The frequency of semantic formulas was also calculated. Frequency is given as the percentage of the total number of semantic formulas produced by the respondents ([particular semantic formula / total semantic formulas] x 100).

We also analyzed the responses for use of introducers (such as, *Well, Mmmm, Oh gosh,* and *Shoot!*) and explicit address to the advisors (i.e., the use of *you*, as in *Do you think it's OK? What should I do? Before you do that...*) as indicators of naturalness.

RESULTS

This section is presented in two parts. In the first part the open questionnaire and the dialogue completion task are compared for all respondents. In the second part the responses of the NS and NNS are compared across tasks.

Group results

The questionnaires elicited 916 rejections: 349 in the open questionnaire and 567 in the dialogue completion task. The 349 responses to the open questionnaire consisted of 806 semantic formulas. The 567 responses to the dialogue completion task yielded 1,447 semantic formulas.

Mean number of semantic formulas. Overall talk as measured by the mean number of semantic formulas increased on the dialogue completion task. The mean length of response in the open questionnaire was 2.31 semantic formulas and 2.55 for the dialogue completion task. Out of the 32 respondents, 22 (or 69%) showed an increase in the mean number of semantic formulas.

Naturalness of Talk. Another factor which changed with the task was the naturalness or talk-like responses they produced. We measured this by two features: introducers and responses which explicitly addressed the advisor by including "you".

Introducers are kinds of hedges such as "well" and "ummm" which occur at the beginning of a response, delaying the actual response. We hypothesized that the dialogue completion task would elicit more such introducers, and that proved to be the case. There was an overall increase from inclusion in 18% of the responses on the questionnaire to 25.9% on the dialogue completion task.[3] There was also a slight use of "you" on the dialogue completion task (13.5% to 16.5%).

Changes in semantic formulas. The distribution of semantic formulas for the open questionnaire and the dialogue completion task overall (i.e., for all items) is very similar. For both tasks, the most commonly used semantic formulas are Explanations, Alternative Declaratives, Alternative Questions, Direct Rejections, and Agree But. Explanations and the two types of Alternatives account for nearly two-thirds of the semantic formulas. Direct Rejections are more common than the use of Agree But on the open questionnaire, but slightly less common on the dialogue completion task (Table 1).

Table 1. Five most frequently used semantic formulas for the OQ and DCT

	Open Questionnaire		Dialogue Completion	
	Raw	Percent	Raw	Percent
Explanation	321	39.8	544	37.6
Alternative D	115	14.3	245	16.9
Alternative Q	96	11.9	151	10.4
Direct Reject	65	8.1	102	7.1
Agree But	40	5.0	116	8.0
Total	806		1447	

The one semantic formula which shows the greatest proportionate change from the open questionnaire to the dialogue completion task is Agree But. This increased from 5.0% of the semantic formulas in the open questionnaire to 8.0%

in the dialogue completion task. In general, however, the change in the use of semantic formulas is best understood by comparing the NS and NNS responses to individual items.

Native vs. Nonnative Responses

In addition to the task influence on the group results, the two sub-groups, NS and NNS, showed different degrees of task influence. NNS responses often changed in the same direction as those of the NS, but more dramatically.

Mean number of semantic formulas. Both NS and NNS showed an increase in amount of talk in the dialogue completion task (Table 2). NS had a slightly higher mean number of semantic formulas on the open questionnaire than did the NNS (2.34 vs. 2.26). NS increased from 2.34 to 2.54 semantic formulas per rejection whereas NNS increased from 2.26 to 2.57 semantic formulas. In addition, a greater proportion of the NNS used more semantic formulas: 77% (or 10 of 13) used more semantic formulas while only 63% (12 of 19) of the NS did so. With respect to mean number of semantic formulas, the NNS showed a greater task effect and looked more like the NS on the dialogue completion task.

Table 2. Mean Number of Semantic Formulas

	Open Questionnaire	Dialogue Completion
Total	2.31	2.55
NS	2.34	2.54
NNS	2.26	2.57

Naturalness of talk. The greater task effect for NNS continues for the use of introducers. NNS showed a greater increase in "natural" responses than did NS. NS showed an increase in the number of responses which begin with Introducers on the dialogue completion task (21.5% vs. 26.5%), but NNS almost doubled in their use of them (12.8% vs. 25.0%). Thus, as with length of response, while the NNS do not look like the NS on the open questionnaire, they come to look more like them on the dialogue completion task. Examples (3) and (4) show the typical differences on the two tasks.

(3) OQ, NNS #28 (Japanese) I'd rather not take classes in summer because I was planning to go back to my home country in summer. Can I take that course in fall or spring semester?

(4) DCT, NNS #28 (Japanese) Well, I'd rather like not to take summer courses because I'm planning to go back to my home country.

One place where NS seem to be more strongly affected by the difference in task than the NNS is in the use of "you" in responses. NNS did not really change across the task on this measure (14.7% vs. 14.4%), while NS increased from 12.7% to 18.4%.

Changes in semantic formulas. When NS and NNS responses are compared we find that Explanations, Alternative Declaratives, and Alternative Questions constitute two-thirds of the semantic formulas across tasks. Explanations continue to be the most frequently used semantic formula by the two groups (Table 3). The NS responses were very close for the use of Alternative Declaratives and Alternative Questions in both tasks, while the NNS favored the use of Alternative Declaratives. The differences between NS and NNS were maintained across tasks. Regarding the other two most frequently used formulas, the use of Direct Rejections (such as, *I'd like not to take this course* or *I don't want to take this course this semester*) dropped from the open questionnaire to the dialogue completion task for both groups, although more for the NNS (8.4% to 6.9%) than for the NS (7.9% to 7.2%). The use of Agree But increased, again more for the NNS (5.0% to 9.4%) than for the NS (5.0% to 7.1%).

Table 3. Five most frequently used semantic formulas for the OQ and DCT by NS and NNS (in percent)

	NS		NNS	
	Open	Dialogue	Open	Dialogue
Explanation	38.7	36.5	41.5	39.1
Alternative D	12.2	14.1	17.3	21.0
Alternative Q	14.7	12.7	7.7	7.2
Direct Reject	7.9	7.2	8.4	6.9
Agree But	5.0	7.1	5.0	9.4

Change in semantic formulas by item. In this section we present the results from six items: three which provided acceptable reasons for rejecting a course and three which are less easily stated directly. Examining individual items also shows that semantic formulas which are not common overall are employed in certain instances. The less sensitive situations are examined first.

In the situation in which the advisor recommends a required course which is at the same time as another course the student wants to take, Explanation is the favored semantic formula, seen in Examples (5) and (6).

(5) OQ, NNS #2 (Chinese) Professor xx, can I take this course till next semester: Because I've got my personal plan to fulfill.

(6) DCT, NNS #2 (Chinese) Yes, Professor xxx, I know I've got to take this course because it's a required course. But, can I take it next semester?

For both NS and NNS the use of Explanations decreased from the open questionnaire to the dialogue completion task (Table 4). The change is noticeably greater for the NNS (48.5% to 29.3%) than for the NS (51.9% to 46.6%). The use of all Alternatives remained constant for the NS although it increased dramatically for the NNS (27.3% to 46.7%). The use of Agree But increased for both groups. Information Questions were used by NNS only in response to the open questionnaire (9.1% of the semantic formulas) and by NS only in response to the dialogue completion task (5.1%).

Table 4. Five most frequently used semantic formulas for the OQ and DCT by NS and NNS, Time Conflict

	NS		NNS	
	Open	Dialogue	Open	Dialogue
Explanation	51.9	46.6	48.5	29.3
Alternative D	21.2	21.2	27.3	46.7
Alternative Q	15.4	13.6	3.0	6.7
Agree But	1.9	5.9	3.0	10.7
Information Q	-.-	5.1	9.1	-.-

In the cases of the summer school course and the course which has already been taken, we expected high use of Direct Rejections because students are not required to take summer courses nor are they required to repeat courses under normal circumstances. The rate of Direct Rejections was understandably higher for the repeated course than for the summer course.

The highest use of Direct Rejections in any response was found in response to the course already taken. NS and NNS alike used this semantic formula most frequently. Both showed a decrease from the open questionnaire to the dialogue completion task with the NS going from 53.6% to 42.7% and the NNS moving from 40.0% to 32.6% (Table 5). Although both NS and NNS showed decreased use of Direct Rejections in response to advisor talk, they showed different directions of change in their use of Explanations. Explanations increased for the NS responses (10.7% to 19.1%) but decreased for the NNS responses (35.0% to 26.1%). This change makes the groups look more similar on the dialogue completion task. Both types of Alternatives are low on this item because students do not need to negotiate their way out of the course. Information Questions (e.g., *What was that course?* or *When does it meet?*) were used by NS in 7.1% of the semantic formulas on the open questionnaire, but this dropped to 2.9%. The NNS did not use this formula on either task.

Table 5. Five most frequently used semantic formulas for the OQ and DCT by NS and NNS, Repeated Course

	NS		NNS	
	Open	Dialogue	Open	Dialogue
Explanation	10.7	19.1	35.0	26.1
Alternative D	7.1	4.4	5.0	8.7
Alternative Q	8.8	-.-	-.-	2.2
Direct Reject	53.6	42.7	40.0	32.6
Record	10.7	-.-	-.-	-.-
Information Q	7.1	2.9	-.-	-.-
Challenge	-.-	-.-	10.0	-.-

Unique to this item is the use of a semantic formula which we call Record in which the student asks the advisor to check his or her academic record to make sure that the course in question has been properly credited, as in Example (7).

(7) OQ, NS #21 I took 'X' during...semester, is there a mistake in my record file?

The NS used this in 10% of all semantic formulas in the open questionnaire but dropped to 2.9% in the dialogue completion task. In the open questionnaire the NNS employed a semantic formula which we call Challenge in which they confront the advisor as in Example (8).

(8) OQ, NNS #32 (Italian) I've already taken this course. Why do you suggest me to take it twice?

The NNS used this in 10.0% of the semantic formulas on the open questionnaire, but dropped it entirely in response to the advisor's turn on the dialogue completion task.

In response to the summer course item, Explanation was the most commonly used semantic formula, as in Example (9).

(9) OQ, NS #14 I need the summer to work. Is the course offered next fall?

NS showed relatively constant use of Explanation in the open questionnaire and the dialogue completion task (45.2% and 46.3%, respectively), but NNS increased slightly from 37.5% to 43.8% becoming more native-like (Table 6).

Table 6. Five most frequently used semantic formulas for the OQ and DCT by NS and NNS, Summer Course

	NS		NNS	
	Open	Dialogue	Open	Dialogue
Explanation	45.2	46.3	37.5	43.8
Alternative D	-.-	7.3	6.3	6.3
Alternative Q	9.5	2.4	3.1	6.3
Direct Reject	28.6	31.7	28.1	18.8
Agree But	7.1	2.4	3.1	3.1
Request Advice	2.4	-.-	9.4	3.1

The next most common semantic formula was the Direct Rejection with the NS showing 28.6% on the open questionnaire and 31.7% on the dialogue completion task. As was the case with the course already taken, NNS decreased their use of Direct Rejections in response to the advisor's turn, going from 28.2% on the open questionnaire to 18.8% on the dialogue completion task. In both responses, the NNS are noticeably lower in their use of Direct Rejections than what seems to be allowable based on the NS replies. In this case NS and NNS responses were essentially identical on the open questionnaire (28.6% and 28.1%, respectively), but were different with the more specific prompt.

The use of other semantic formulas were marginal and scattered. The next most common semantic formula for NS was Agree But used in 7.1% of the semantic formulas on the open questionnaire, dropping to 2.4% on the dialogue completion task. For the NNS, Request Advice comprised 9.4% of the semantic formulas on the open questionnaire, but dropped to 3.1% on the dialogue completion task. Example (10) shows a Request Advice.

(10) OQ, NNS #5 (Korean) Well, I don't think I can study well during the summer. It's so hot and everybody will be gone somewhere then. What would you say?

Rejecting a course which the advisor is scheduled to teach is relatively sensitive. From the open questionnaire to the dialogue completion task there was a drop in Explanations from 42.0% to 25.5% for the NS and a similar drop for NNS from 44.8% to 28.1% (Table 7). Example (11) shows a typical Explanation for this item.

(11) OQ, NS #9 Hmm, sounds interesting, but I might have a slight problem here, since I was planning to take an elective outside the department, which meets at the same time.

The use of Alternative Questions was low for both groups. The use of Alternative Declaratives moved in different directions for NS and NNS from the open questionnaire to the dialogue completion task, increasing for NS (4.0% to 18.2%) and decreasing for NNS (from 17.2% to 12.5%). Agree But, a semantic formula which ranked fourth or fifth overall (see Table 3) moved into second place in response to this item. On the open questionnaire NS used Agree But in 14.0% of the semantic formulas, increasing to 21.8% on the dialogue completion task. In contrast, the NNS used Agree But much less frequently (3.5%) on the open questionnaire, but they increased their use of this formula to 21.9%, a level comparable to that of the NS. The contrast can be seen in Examples (12) and (13).

(12) OQ, NNS #6 (Mandarin) Well, I have no interest in this topic. It's not my concentration. Can you suggest me another course?

(13) DCT, NNS #6 (Mandarin) I know sociolinguistics is very interesting, but considering my career goal, I think I should take...first.

The presence of the advisor talk caused all respondents to mitigate their rejections more often.

Table 7. Five most frequently used semantic formulas for the OQ and DCT by NS and NNS, Advisor's Elective

	NS		NNS	
	Open	Dialogue	Open	Dialogue
Explanation	42.0	25.5	44.8	28.1
Alternative D	4.0	18.2	17.2	12.5
lternative Q	10.0	5.5	3.5	3.1
Direct Reject	4.0	3.6	3.5	12.5
Agree But	14.0	21.8	3.5	21.9

Direct Rejection stayed the same for NS, but increased for NNS on the dialogue completion task, becoming less native-like, at 12.5% of the semantic formulas used. This seems surprising given that we had expected students to want to avoid rejecting an advisor's course outright. Example (14) shows such a rejection.

(14) OQ, NNS #1 (Chinese)
I don't think that sociolinguistics is
interesting to me, so I'm not going to take it.

Rejecting a course because of the professor might not be as difficult as rejecting the advisor's own course, but we expected it to also be a sensitive situation because the student would have to reject the advisor's colleague. As in rejecting the advisor's course, a much higher use of Agree But than on the instruments overall occurred (see Table 3), particularly in response to the nondirective suggestion. There is also a relatively high rate of the general category of Alternatives which makes up no less than 41.3% under any condition (Table 8).

The high use of Alternatives suggests that, for students, not taking a course with a particular (somehow undesirable) professor is very important, and so they work hard by making counter proposals to the advisor. We had not anticipated this degree of investment from the respondents to this item. The use of Explanations dropped from the open questionnaire to the dialogue completion task with the difference being greater for the NNS (44.8% to 28.4%) than for the NS (37.5% to 32.0%).

Table 8. Five most frequently used semantic formulas for the OQ and DCT by NS and NNS, Undesirable Professor

	NS		NNS	
	Open	Dialogue	Open	Dialogue
Explanation	37.5	26.1	44.8	28.5
Alternative D	47.5	30.4	31.0	31.0
Alternative Q	2.5	10.9	17.2	11.9
Agree But	7.5	13.0	3.4	19.0

The dropped course item is difficult for the students because they caused their own problem in part by dropping a required course. They learn that it will not be offered again until the semester after they had planned to graduate. For NS Explanations constituted 41.3% and 42.1% of the total semantic formulas on the two forms, showing virtually no change, while the NNS only offered Explanations for 33.3% of the semantic formulas on the open form. However, the percentage of NNS Explanations rose to 48.7% on the dialogue completion task, surpassing, as in other cases, their use by NS (Table 9).

Alternative Declaratives were used very little by the NS on this item, in contrast to their use of Alternatives on the task as a whole where they ranked second (Table 1). Perhaps NS recognize that they are not in the position to offer Alternatives directly since it was their own actions that resulted in their situation. For NS the use of Alternative Questions, the less direct form of the Alternative, is similar in the open questionnaire and the dialogue completion task (27.6% and 26.3%). The NNS responses were much more similar to those of the NS on the dialogue completion task. The use of Alternative Declaratives on the open questionnaire (12.1%) fell to zero on the dialogue completion task and the use of Alternative Questions increased from 9.1% on the open questionnaire to 25.6% on the dialogue completion task.

Table 9. Five most frequently used semantic formulas for the OQ and DCT by NS and NNS, Dropped Course

	NS		NNS	
	Open	Dialogue	Open	Dialogue
Explanation	41.3	42.1	33.3	48.7
Alternative D	1.7	3.5	12.1	-.-
Alternative Q	27.6	26.3	9.1	25.6
Request Advice	6.9	3.5	21.2	7.7
Request Empathy	3.4	3.5	9.1	-.-

NS Requests for Advice were at 6.9% on the open form and dropped to 3.5% on the dialogue completion task, while the NNS requested such advice at 21.2% on the open form as in Example (15) and also dropped on the dialogue completion task, to 7.7%. In this case, both groups are affected similarly by the task, but, as we have come to expect, the NNS show a greater sensitivity.

(15) OQ, NNS #1 (Chinese) Although I understand this course is necessary for my graduation, I don't have adequate financial support for next semester. What am I supposed to do?

Finally, the two groups differ in their Requests for Empathy. On both instruments, the NS tried to elicit empathy for their plight from the advisor in about the same ratio (3.4% vs. 3.5%). The NNS, on the other hand, only used this formula on the open form (9.1%) and completely dropped such requests on the dialogue completion task. Example (16) shows a NNS Request for Empathy, while Example (17) shows an extended NS response to this item.

(16) OQ, NNS #4 (Japanese) Could you help me? I am in very difficult situation.-- Blah blah--I'm wondering if I could have this course waived or I could take any substitute?

(17) OQ, NS #20 I thought dropping that course was the correct thing to do at the time, but I see now it was a big mistake. An extra semester to take that course will be more time and money than I have. Is there a way I can replace the course or do a special assignment or fulfill the requirements. I'm at a real loss as to

what to do. Can you help me with any suggestions--I'm willing to do anything that would help me graduate on time.

Responses to directive and nondirective suggestions. In general, the influence of the directive and non-directive forms of the suggestions provided on the dialogue completion task was not as great as the presence of speech itself. The exception to this is the use of Alternatives by NS. While the presentation of Alternatives in some form (Declaratives or Questions) remained constant at 29.4% (adding the Alternative categories together), NS adjusted the form of their Alternatives to suit the directness of the advisor's suggestion (Table 10).

Table 10. Five most frequently used semantic formulas on the dialogue completion task for directive and nondirective prompts by NS and NNS

	NS		NNS	
	Direct	Nondirect	Direct	Nondirect
Explanation	39.4	45.2	43.4	38.2
Alternative D	11.6	19.5	23.2	25.9
Alternative Q	17.8	9.9	4.2	7.8
Direct Reject	7.5	8.1	6.3	7.3
Agree But	5.1	7.7	7.4	10.8

NS provided more Alternative Declaratives in response to the nondirectives (19.5%) than to the directives (11.6%), and they offered more Alternative Questions to the directives (17.8%) than to the nondirectives (9.9%). Thus, the NS used a more deferential form in response to the more authoritative directive than to the nondirective. In contrast, the NNS showed little sensitivity to the change in advisor talk.

Both groups used a slightly higher proportion of Agree But responses and Direct Rejections to the nondirectives. We conclude that in the present task, the presence of an advisor's turn is in general more important than the form of the turn itself.

CONCLUSION

The addition of the advisor turn on the dialogue completion task results in a task effect. The dialogue completion task more clearly defines the situation for the participants causing the NS and the NNS to use semantic formulas more similarly with respect to distribution in many cases. This often means that the NNS show greater task effects as they move toward the NS response on the dialogue completion task.

In general, NNS showed a quantitatively greater difference in response across the instruments than did the NS. Moreover, the change for the NNS was often in a direction on the dialogue completion task which brought them more in line with the NS profiles (such as length of response, use of introducers, and use of certain semantic formulas), although in some cases they moved further in this direction than the NS did. The task influence indicates that the turn or turns which may be provided by a dialogue completion task help the respondents to frame their replies. The presence of talk makes less difference for the NS who are more adept at imagining a plausible conversational turn given a scenario than the NNS. Similarly, NNS may be less able to construct plausible conversational turns given a scenario. The increased specificity of the dialogue completion task over the open questionnaire is particularly important to the NNS.

These findings seem to be at odds with those of Rose (1992) who found that the presence of speech made little difference, but the results are easily reconciled when one takes into account the types of speech acts investigated. Rose examined requests which are initiating speech acts and thus may stand alone. This study investigated rejections which are reactive speech acts, which never stand alone. Providing hearer responses to participant initiated speech acts is not as important as supplying interlocutor turns to which the participants reply. Thus, the presence of preceding turns for the elicitation of reactive speech acts, such as rejections, acceptances, replies to compliments, and medial turns in openings and closings, to name a few, are expected to influence the data.

Different forms of DCTs elicit different responses especially from NNS. This finding is important for interlanguage studies, and should be kept in mind by investigators utilizing this kind of task, since their results may be quite strongly affected by the type of instrument they use. Providing authentic utterances as prompts in DCTs is particularly important when the speech act under investigation is a response (such as rejections or responses to compliments) rather than an initiation (such as a compliment or an invitation). We conclude that, although DCT elicitations cannot entirely replace the study of natural conversation in interlanguage pragmatics, DCTs can be refined to elicit more natural responses by including authentic speech.

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NOTES

[1] Two additional items were designed to elicit statements of responsibility or blame. We will not discuss those here as they are not directly relevant to this study. There were 20 total items on the dialogue completion task.

[2] Recently we were discussing with a faculty colleague whether a particular student had enrolled in that colleague's seminar. Our colleague, who was also the student's advisor, explained that the student had not enrolled in the seminar and offered as further explanation the fact that when one is both the advisor and the instructor, one is reluctant to insist that the student take the course.

[3] For introducers, as well as the use of "you," occurrence in number of responses is calculated rather than percentage of total number of semantic formulas because a given reply can only have one introducer. In contrast, a single response may show two or more of the rejection formulas such as Explanations or Alternatives.

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APPENDIX A

Discourse Completion Tasks

[Please note that the lines for the student responses have been removed from all but the first example. To derive the Open Questionnaire, delete the advisor's turn on the items with the asterisk.]

In the following situations, imagine that you are a graduate student who has gone to see an advisor to register for courses for next semester.

*1. Your advisor suggests that you take a required course. You want to try to have the course waived because you don't think it's relevant to your career goals.

Advisor: Now you need thirty credits of which you have to take L530. So, um, I'm going to go ahead and write that down for fall.

You say: _____
_____
_____

*2. Your advisor suggests that you take a course which you would rather not take because you think that it will be too difficult for you.

Advisor: Well, there's Syntax.

*3. During your advising session you find out that a required course which you had dropped from your schedule the previous semester will not be offered until the semester after you had planned to graduate. This is a real financial burden for you.

Advisor: In order to graduate you need to take Traditional Grammar semester after next.

*4. Your advisor suggests that you take a required course. You want to try to have this course waived because you have already taken a course that you think is similar to the one that's being suggested.

Advisor:

*5. Your advisor suggests that you take a course during the summer. You prefer not to take classes during the summer.

Advisor: What about taking testing in the summer?

*6. Your advisor suggests that you take a course which you would rather not take because you think that it will be a waste of your time since it will be too easy for you.

Advisor: Well, there's Syntax.

*7. [Not analyzed in this study]

*8. Your advisor suggests that you take an elective class that he's teaching, but you are not interested in the topic.

Advisor: You could take Sociolinguistics...so, um...you know, I'm teaching Sociolinguistics in the fall.

*9. Your advisor suggests that you take a required class that he's teaching, but you are not interested in the topic.

Advisor: Yeah, Phonetics is taught in the fall. And then in the spring there's Phonology. So, after you take Phonetics then you can take Phonology...so, um... you know, I'm teaching Phonology.

*10. Your advisor suggests that you to take a required course (which is offered every semester) which conflicts with a course in another department which you have been wanting to take ever since you started your program.

Advisor: You need to take Second Language Acquisition this semester.

*11. Your advisor suggests that you take a course that you have already taken.

Advisor: If you're interested in Phonology you can take Professor Smith's L410.

*12. Your advisor suggests that you take a particular required course next semester. You know that the timing is good, but you would prefer not to take the course from the professor who is teaching it. If you wait one more semester you can take it from someone else.

Advisor: You probably want to take Second Language Acquisition.

*13. Your advisor offers you the choice between two electives that he thinks that you should take. You do not want to commit yourself to either course at this time.

Advisor: Now for the other three credits, you can take either sociolinguistics or the survey of applied linguistics.

*14. Your advisor suggests that you take a course which you would rather not take because you think that it will be too difficult for you.

Advisor: If you're registered in our program you must take Syntax.

*15. Your advisor suggests that you take a required course. You want to try to have this course waived because you have already taken a course that you think is similar to the one that's being suggested.

Advisor: We want you to take at least Phonetics this semester.

*16. Your advisor suggests that you take a course which you would rather not take because you think that it will be a waste of your time since it will be too easy for you.

Advisor: If you're registered in our program you must take Syntax.

*17. Your advisor suggests that you to take a required course (which is offered every semester) which conflicts with a course in another department which you have been wanting to take ever since you started your program.

Advisor: You probably want to take Second Language Acquisition this semester.

*18. Your advisor suggests that you take a course that you have already taken.

Advisor: If you're interested in Phonology I strongly suggest that you take Professor Smith's L410.

*19. Your advisor suggests that you take a particular required course next semester. You know that the timing is good, but you would prefer not to take the course from the professor who is teaching it. If you wait one more semester you can take it from someone else.

Advisor: You need ten more credits, and you haven't done Second Language Acquisition. I'm going to write that down for fall.

*20. [Not analyzed in this study]